

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr on Tuesday introduced legislation that would allow individuals accused of violating federal marijuana laws to offer evidence in federal court that their use of medical marijuana followed state medical marijuana laws.

Rep. Farr introduced the bill, called the Truth in Trials Act, in the wake of a recent directive from the Justice Department telling federal prosecutors not to prosecute individuals who are following state medical marijuana laws. The bill would codify legal protections for defendants caught between state and federal laws, ensuring that state medical marijuana laws remain a defense in federal trials even if a future administration overturns the recent guidelines.

"This is a common sense bill that will help stop the waste of law enforcement and judicial resources that have been spent prosecuting individuals who are following state laws," Rep. Farr said. "We need strict drug laws, but we also need to apply a little common sense to how they're enforced. This legislation is about the fair treatment of defendants in medical marijuana trials, plain and simple."

The Truth in Trials Act, H.R. 3939, would mean defendants could be found not guilty if they're found to have followed state medical marijuana laws. Currently, medical marijuana patients, along with growers and distributors, are not allowed to use medical purposes as a defense for using marijuana, even if their state permits such use.

"The Truth in Trials bill seeks to restore the balance of justice and bring fundamental fairness to federal medical marijuana trials," said Caren Woodson, Government Affairs Director with Americans for Safe Access, a group advancing safe and legal access to cannabis solely for therapeutic use and research. "This legislation complements the recent Justice Department guidelines for federal prosecutors and is now more necessary than ever."

Rep. Farr's legislation has been endorsed by a wide range of health and marijuana advocacy groups including Americans for Safe Access, the National Association of People with AIDS, the National Minority AIDS Council, the Interfaith Drug Policy Initiative, the Marijuana Policy Project and NORML.

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (D-Huntington Beach), an original cosponsor of Rep. Farr's bill, said: "The federal government should never have overridden state law on this issue to begin with and this legislation will prevent them from doing it again."

Rep. Farr added: "This bill does not alter criminal penalties for individuals using of marijuana outside of authorized medical use, but it does protect the 75 million Americans in 13 states who are following the law and using marijuana for medical purposes. This bipartisan bill is about compassion and about state rights, and I look forward to its passage."

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